



# OPE Update

Biannual Newsletter of the

OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS  
IDAHO LEGISLATURE

## Happy New Year!

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**Chris Shoop**  
graduated in  
December with a  
Master of Public  
Administration  
degree from Boise  
State University.

## From the Director

### Accountability, the Cornerstone of Good Government

On September 16, I had the privilege of taking the oath of US citizenship. This special event in my life has made me think about the similarities and differences between two great nations, the United States and India (where I spent the first 20 years of my life).

Both countries have many things in common—democratically elected government, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and a free press. Yet, we are sadly aware of the fact that India has a sluggish, ineffective, and corrupt government bureaucracy, which makes the everyday life of most Indians an unpleasant experience. For an average Indian, two words—good and government—do not coexist, in spite of many talented, honest, and dedicated people working in government.

There is no one single cause for the absence of good government in India.

Having worked for 17 years as an evaluator/auditor for legislative oversight offices in Kansas, Louisiana, Washington, and now in Idaho, I see one clear difference between the two countries—India lacks the concept of accountability at all levels of government. Whenever I tell someone in India what I do for living, no one has a clue what I'm talking about.

Accountability in government does not happen just because a nation has a democratically elected government or a constitution that provides basic rights to its citizen. Both the leaders and the public have to believe in accountability and collectively strive to establish and maintain it. We can't take accountability in government for granted; it takes a concerted effort of everyone involved. I am proud to be part of an office whose mission is to promote good government.

### Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC)

Sen. Shawn Keough, Co-chair  
Sen. John Andreason  
Sen. Bert Marley  
Sen. Kate Kelly

Rep. Margaret Henbest, Co-chair  
Rep. Maxine Bell  
Rep. Debbie Field  
Rep. Donna Boe

## Projects Completed

### **State Substance Abuse Treatment Efforts** [idaho.gov/oep/publications/reports/r0504.htm](http://idaho.gov/oep/publications/reports/r0504.htm)

In December, we released a report which concluded that state efforts to address substance abuse are fragmented, in spite of Idaho Code requiring a comprehensive and integrated system. This fragmentation has contributed to the absence of statewide information necessary to answer basic questions such as:

1. What are the statewide needs for services to address substance abuse?
2. What is the state's capacity to meet those needs?
3. What types of services are being provided, to which groups of people, and to how many people?
4. Which programs are working?
5. Are state efforts making a difference?

Collectively, five state entities—Health and Welfare, Correction, Juvenile Corrections, Education, along with the Judicial Branch that oversees drug courts—spent about \$27.5 million in fiscal year 2005 on substance abuse treatment and prevention services. Health and Welfare spent about half of those funds.

We found specific problems with the management of the state's substance abuse treatment services, including inadequate monitoring and oversight of the contractor and service providers, weakness in processes to ensure treatment quality, unreliable data about clients and program services, and insufficient information about program results.

Project lead: Chris Shoop

### **Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind** [idaho.gov/oep/publications/reports/r0503.htm](http://idaho.gov/oep/publications/reports/r0503.htm)

In October, we released a report which concluded that the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind (ISDB) is at a turning point for policymakers to determine its future. The school's enrollment is declining, costs per student are rising, campus facilities are used at less than one-half capacity, and school districts are requesting more regional services.

Last school year the annual cost for each ISDB residential student was approximately \$82,000. During the past 15 years, enrollment at ISDB has dropped 40 percent. As of September 2005, there were 75 students enrolled on the campus—37 residential and 38 day students. Options for policymakers to consider for ISDB include continuing with the current service delivery model and incorporating OPE recommendations, or choosing a new approach that addresses declining enrollment and meets contemporary student needs. We offered nine recommendations to improve program management and ensure adherence to Idaho statutes.

Project lead: Paul Headlee

## Next JLOC Meeting

The meeting is scheduled for January 12 at 4:00 p.m. in the East Conference Room of J.R. Williams Office Building. At this meeting, Committee members will discuss OPE's report, *State Substance Abuse Treatment Efforts*. Staff will also present a comparative analysis of the OPE recommendations contained in its report, *Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind*, and the recommendations made by the State Board of Education's Committee on the Education of the Deaf and the Blind.

## Soon to Be Released

### Health and Welfare Management

Expected Release Date: February 27, 2006

At its October meeting, JLOC approved a scope for the study of management of the Department of Health and Welfare. The study was requested by Representative Sharon Block, chair of the House Health and Welfare Committee.

As part of the study, we have surveyed nearly 2,800 employees (all staff, supervisors, and mid-managers) about the following issues: management and leadership, workload and staffing, policies and training, agency communication, and morale and job satisfaction.

We are reviewing the methods used by the department for assessing and managing its workloads and caseloads, and making staffing decisions. We will also analyze staff turnover in the department and the role of the Board of Health and Welfare.

Project lead: Ned Parrish

## Evaluation Topic Selection

OPE receives evaluation assignments from JLOC, an 8-member bipartisan committee. The committee focuses on evaluation topics that address statewide issues and are timely and relevant to the Legislature's information needs.

Lawmakers are invited to help us identify issues and areas of government that may need an in-depth performance review. By addressing relevant and timely topics, we can provide the Legislature with information necessary for making policy and budget decisions, and can help agencies effectively carry out their responsibilities. Any legislator can request a performance evaluation by writing to either JLOC or OPE.

## 2005 Impact Award

The National Legislative Program Evaluation Society recognized OPE for its report, *Fiscal Accountability of Pupil Transportation*. The report offered nine recommendations to address state oversight, district administration, contract management, bus purchasing, and funding cap implementation. Implementation of these recommendations has helped the state improve accountability of pupil transportation, reduce costs, and ensure safe and cost-effective transportation for Idaho's youth attending public schools.

## Staff Activities

**Paul and Ned** presented the *Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind* report to the State Board of Education's Committee on the Education of the Deaf and the Blind.

**Paul and Rakesh** presented the *Public Education Technology Initiatives* report to the Idaho Centennial Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants.

**Rakesh** participated in panels at the annual meetings of the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, the American Evaluation Association, and the Joint Pacific Northwest/Western Intergovernmental Audit Forum. At these meetings, he presented the work of JLOC and OPE and discussed issues relating to performance measurement, auditing and evaluation standards, and the No Child Left Behind Act.

Rakesh also made presentations to the Idaho Fiscal Officer's Association and to government classes at Boise State University.

### Staff

- Director:  
Rakesh Mohan
- Adm. Coordinator:  
Margaret Campbell
- Principal Evaluator:  
Ned Parrish
- Senior Evaluators:  
A.J. Burns  
Paul Headlee  
Chris Shoop
- Evaluators:  
Rachel Johnstone
- Intern:  
Courtney Haines

### Office of Performance Evaluations Idaho Legislature

J. R. Williams Office Building  
700 West State Street, Suite 10  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0055

Phone: 208-334-3880  
Fax: 208-334-3871  
Email: [opeinfo@ope.idaho.gov](mailto:opeinfo@ope.idaho.gov)

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
[WWW.IDAHO.GOV/OPE](http://WWW.IDAHO.GOV/OPE)

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## JLOC and OPE Are Making a Difference

### Public Education Technology Initiatives

[idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0501.htm](http://idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0501.htm)

The January 2005 report was an evaluation of the Idaho Educational Technology Initiative of 1994. We concluded the success of the initiative had been primarily measured by the number of computers purchased, with less emphasis on cost-effectiveness and adequate technical support to maintain the investment. The report also found that after adjusting for inflation, state funds appropriated to the initiative had decreased 39 percent over the past decade.

The report's findings assisted the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) in appropriating an additional \$1 million to the initiative for fiscal year 2006, and providing flexibility to allow school districts to use more of the funds for technical support.

### Child Welfare Caseload Management

[idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0502.htm](http://idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0502.htm)

The February 2005 report provided information that assisted JFAC members in assessing the Department of Health and Welfare's request for additional staff in the child welfare program.

### Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement

[idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0404.htm](http://idaho.gov/ope/publications/reports/r0404.htm)

Based on the recommendations contained in the December 2004 report, the Legislature unanimously passed House Bill 300 in both the Senate and the House during the 2005 legislative session. The bill, which became law on July 1, strengthens and streamlines performance measurement requirements by:

- Formalizing legislative involvement
- Requiring agencies to provide basic profile information—statutory authority, revenue and expenditure breakdowns, and types of cases managed or key services provided
- Requiring agencies to report key performance indicators with benchmarks, actual results, and explanations